United Nations A/C.3/58/SR.13

General Assembly
Fifty-eighth session
Official Records

Distr.: General
31 October 2003

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 13th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 16 October 2003, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Priputen ..... (Slovakia)

Contents

Agenda item 110: Advancement of women (*continued*)

Agenda item 111: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" (*continued*)

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03-56475 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 110: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/58/3, A/58/38 (Supplement No. 38), A/58/161, A/58/167 and Add.1, A/58/168, A/58/374, A/58/341 and A/58/417)

Agenda item 111: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" (*continued*) (A/58/3 and A/58/166)

1. **Ms. Arias** (Peru) said that violence against women was a highly complex phenomenon involving a variety of factors. It affected individuals, families and society as a whole, impeded the establishment of democratic relations and entailed a risk of social disruption. Accordingly, the Government had assigned priority to combating domestic and sexual violence as a token of its political will to address discrimination and violence against women. Adopting a human-rights and gender-perspective approach, it was currently implementing its National Plan to Combat Violence against Women, aimed essentially at prevention, care and recovery of victims, research and information for decision-making, and institutional legislation and praxis.

2. With regard to the empowerment of women and their participation in policy-making, a quota system was applied in the electoral process and, although women's representation did not yet equal that of men, it had increased in recent years. Indeed, for the first time a woman was President of the Council of Ministers. Another initiative was the Equal Opportunities Plan 2002-2005, which sought to change cultural patterns so as to endorse equality as a social asset and on a day-to-day basis, through concerted action by the decentralized State bodies, women's organizations and relevant civic associations. The community had acknowledged the success of women's organizations, including those devoted to the defence of human rights, as a local tool in the development process. One multi-agency body that promoted the empowerment of women was the Gender Bureau, composed of representatives of the public sector, civil society and international cooperation agencies.

3. Although a large percentage of children had access to primary education, there was a marked difference in access between urban and rural areas, and the problems of dropout and educational quality persisted. In that context, with the promulgation of the Act on the Promotion of Education of Rural Girls and Adolescents, a committee had been set up to enforce it, advocating policies and coordinating intersectoral action on education, health, and women and social development. The 2002 National Agreement on Governance pledged to promote healthy motherhood and offer family-planning advice, allowing people to choose their preferred method without coercion, and defined a multisector policy for teenage mothers, guaranteeing them access to family planning that fully respected their informed decisions.

4. Her Government was committed to abiding by international provisions and the WHO recommendations, using a human-rights approach. With the idea of providing comprehensive health care, protecting human dignity and preventing disease, including sexually transmitted diseases, especially HIV/AIDS, a series of health policies and programmes were being prepared for the entire population, in close coordination with the public and social sectors. Moreover, the National Plan of Action for Children included education on sexual and reproductive health and prevention of sexually risky behaviour. Strategies to reinforce such education included prevention of early pregnancies, and promotion of responsible parenthood.

5. **Mr. Hjálmarsson** (Iceland) said that, despite global awareness of the need to protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including those of women and girls, and repeated international commitments to do so, not only had there been little progress regarding all aspects of women's rights at the country level, but in some instances those acquired were under threat.

6. The United Nations had done sterling work in reaching agreements on women's rights, and it was not acceptable to weaken commitments to abide by those agreements. Improving the situation of women worldwide called for a progress-oriented approach that focused on implementation. In that connection, Iceland would shortly be submitting, on behalf of the Nordic countries, a draft resolution on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which, with its Optional Protocol — both

ratified by Iceland — was a key instrument for ensuring equal enjoyment of all human rights by women. States that had not ratified or acceded to those instruments should do so, while others should promptly withdraw their reservations, especially those that were incompatible with the purpose of the Convention. And, in any event, ratification without action was meaningless.

7. His delegation welcomed the timely initiative on women's political participation, which it hoped would result in a forward-looking text, and commended the effort to obtain an omnibus resolution on the universal crime of violence against women, as well as inclusion of a chapter on domestic violence, which would break the silence and denial surrounding it. In his country, non-governmental organizations had played a pivotal role in addressing violence against women and domestic violence. One priority of the committee set up by the Minister of Social Affairs to coordinate related measures, including awareness campaigns on the high social cost of violence against women, would be to enhance cooperation between the Government and the all-important non-governmental organizations. With the imminent third anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) — referred to in draft resolutions currently being negotiated in the Committee — Member States must redouble their efforts to secure its full implementation, especially regarding women's greater participation in decision-making.

8. **Ms. Critchlow** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the documentation provided, coupled with the presentations made from the rostrum, was an ample basis for evaluating global efforts towards gender equality and the empowerment of women. Although great strides had been made over the years, owing, inter alia, to recognition of the national and global implications of women's rights for the construction and strengthening of democratic societies, more needed to be done. Women in the Caribbean, as in all developing countries, continued to confront globalization-related problems and were disproportionately represented among the poor. Consequently, women were targeted in poverty-eradication policies and strategies in all CARICOM States, which recognized the role of innovative mechanisms in the interest of poverty-eradication. Haiti was conducting a microcredit project to give poor women access to entrepreneurship.

9. Although not plagued by armed conflict, the CARICOM countries were moved by the suffering that the phenomenon inflicted on women and children elsewhere, and called for a continued search for solutions in addressing the root causes of conflicts. They also advocated redoubling efforts towards the full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session, and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. Since development and peace could be achieved only when women could participate fully and on an equal footing in social affairs, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women remained central to their strategy for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. Accordingly, they endeavoured, despite the challenges that they faced, to fulfil their reporting obligations to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, recognizing that the submission of reports was an integral part of promoting women's rights. Her own country's report was awaiting consideration by the Committee. Valuing its dialogue with that Committee and in the interest of broadening its cultural and geographical perspective, CARICOM endorsed the Jamaican candidacy for election to the Committee and hoped that it benefit from Member States' support.

10. CARICOM ministers responsible for gender and women's affairs, and the Council for Human and Social Development had not long since agreed to mainstream gender in key regional programmes in the five priority areas of health, education, poverty, violence and political participation, a decision that had led to the adoption of a three-year implementation strategy starting with education. The strategy focused on gender-training modules, the causes of gender differentials in education, the status of teachers, and a regional workshop on gender disaggregation of technical vocational education and its implications. The required information on education indicators was being acquired by the Centre for Gender and Development in collaboration with the CARICOM Secretariat, with funding from the Caribbean Development Bank and the Canadian International Development Agency's (CIDA) Gender Equality Programme.

11. Great attention was paid to health, given the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the region and its disproportionate effect on women. National and

regional strategies had been gender-mainstreamed for prevention and care, and all CARICOM countries, including the Bahamas, now had prevention programmes for reducing mother-to-child transmission. The elimination of violence against women had been assigned high priority by the Governments of the region, and the earlier focus on curative action was incrementally yielding place to preventive measures, including the study of the root causes of the phenomenon, and an integrated approach to the problem. The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States was reviewing its family law and domestic violence legislation, while other countries of the region were preparing gender policies with support from UNDP, ECLAC and CIDA.

12. Trinidad and Tobago's National Gender Policy and Action Plan encompassed all aspects of gender equality, including harmonious relationships and family life, with a view to accelerating the country's social, political and cultural growth, while Belize's new Women's Agenda committed the new Government to specific actions in favour of women, thus adding impetus to its national, regional and international commitments. The CARICOM States had made great strides towards women's equal access to and full participation in decision-making, and over 30 per cent of parliamentarians or senators in many countries were women. Appreciation was due to UNIFEM, UNFPA and CIDA for their critical assistance in the CARICOM States' efforts to implement the Beijing Platform for Action and attain the Millennium Development Goals. CARICOM was confident that the requisite political will, resources, development of genuine partnerships and the involvement of both sexes would make the Beijing Platform for Action a reality. CARICOM was also concerned at the failure to appoint a Director of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), which had been created with a specific mandate that would make a positive impact on the lives of women.

13. **Ms. González Fraga** (Cuba) said that conditions for women were still very difficult, particularly in developing countries. There were almost two billion poor in the world, and almost 70 per cent of them were women. Moreover, the proportion of women in the economically active population had only increased by about four percentage points in the last 20 years. Women were more liable to be employed in part-time work, and they represented between 63 per cent and 92 per cent of part-time labour. Almost 900 million adults were illiterate and two-thirds of them were women, while nearly twice as many girls as boys did not have access to primary education. In the industrialized countries, domestic violence had reached alarming proportions and racism and xenophobia were also cause of concern. Domestic service and prostitution provided employment for women immigrants, but made them vulnerable to the law and their employers.

14. The implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly presented a challenge to the United Nations system, women's organizations and, above all, Governments. Access to resources was essential in order to attain the goals of equality, development and peace established in Beijing. With the end of the cold war, it had been hoped that the resources invested in the arms race would be used to promote human development. However, the arms race continued and resources were increasingly being used for superfluous expenses.

15. The cultural, technical and professional levels achieved by women in Cuba and their participation in the economic, political and social sectors reflected the constant efforts of Cuban women and the political will of the Government. In 1959, women represented only 12 per cent of the workforce, and two-thirds of them were illiterate. Today, almost 45 per cent of the workforce were women, and almost 67 per cent of senior and mid-level researchers and professional technicians were women. Women occupied over 33 per cent of management positions, and 36 per cent of the deputies in the Parliament were women, ensuring that women's interests were taken into consideration in the decision-making process. Cuban women were the focus of the economic and social development process, and they had promoted and benefited from reforms in health, education and legislation; however, education had provided the key to achieving gender equality.

16. Progress had been achieved despite the difficulties arising from the ruthless embargo imposed almost 40 years ago by the United States Government. It should not be considered that the embargo was becoming more flexible in view of recent sales of food to Cuba. The complex procedures involved, which were totally alien to the rules of international trade, illustrated the extent of that illegal policy of unilateral sanctions. Cuba had recently been accused of human-trafficking and of exploiting children in order to

promote the tourism industry. The accusation was totally false. Several United Nations agencies had recognized that Cuba set an example for the defence and protection of the rights of its children, youth and women. Her country would never tolerate activities that promoted commercial sexual exploitation, sexual abuse or trafficking in its children and youth.

17. Instead of accusing others, the United States should resolve its own problems in that area. According to reports by non-governmental organizations devoted to combating human-trafficking, between 45,000 and 50,000 persons are trafficked every year towards the United States to work as prostitutes, while 400,000 children were used for commercial sexual exploitation. Cuba was continuing to develop its national action plan to follow-up on the Beijing Conference and reiterated its firm political commitment to continue strengthening its strategies, programmes and actions to promote gender mainstreaming and equality.

18. **Ms. Tiendrébéogo** (Burkina Faso) said that her Government had made great efforts to improve women's socio-economic status. The achievements and deficiencies revealed by the 2002 review of the Triennial Plan of Action 1998-2000 had led to the formulation of a new action plan for 2003-2007, itself the outcome of consultations among decision-makers, grass-roots organizations, non-governmental organizations and development partners, which pursued not only the objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action, but those established in the Government's National Anti-Poverty Strategy, in order to reduce poverty by means of women's socio-economic promotion, with greater gender equity.

19. Priority action programmes included higher incomes and better working conditions for women, strengthened female human resources, promotion of women's expertise and the basic rights of women and girls, a greater role for women in management of the overall environment, raising awareness of inequities suffered by women, and strengthened institutions for the promotion of women. For the effective implementation of that plan, the Government had established orientation and monitoring bodies, and the national coordination body for the action plan for the promotion of women, chaired by the Prime Minister, comprised heads of ministries, presidents of institutions, and representatives of recognized public women's organizations. The theme of its forthcoming two-day annual meeting was "Strategies for implementing the Plan of Action 2003-2007".

20. Mindful of its international commitments, Burkina Faso had submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) its fourth and fifth periodic reports, covering the period 1993-2001. In each of the areas considered by the Committee, it was apparent that the Government had shown genuine commitment to promoting the cause of women, with support from its partners and women's organizations. However, there remained areas of concern, such as the persistence of poverty that adversely affected women's education and health, ignorance and inadequate implementation of measures in favour of women and persistent sociocultural traditions that perpetuated violence against women and girls.

21. Endeavouring to determine the causes of the mediocre success of its many women-oriented ventures, the Government, in collaboration with the World Bank, had examined the obstacles to women's access to legal services and undertaken a critical review of the lessons learned during an initiative to enhance awareness of the law. Those studies would doubtless be useful in developing initiatives for improving the legal status of women. In economic terms, a crucial component of the fight against poverty had been the acquisition of suitable technologies.

22. In order to increase women's incomes, the Government had supplied women's associations with a variety of low-technology household tools, which members were trained to use and maintain for producing high-quality almonds, while benefiting from partnership, communication, guidance and dissemination. The Government was resolved to improve the living conditions of women and supported women's associations, non-governmental associations and development partners. She urged the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to do its utmost to revitalize INSTRAW and urged Member States to be flexible in the negotiations on resolutions, in the interest of consensus conclusions.

23. **Ms. Van der Steen** (Netherlands) said that she wished to focus on the impact of age, age discrimination and the ageing society on the position of women and the need to put those issues high on the international agenda. She appealed for more focus on the interrelatedness of gender and age and for more

research on the subject. Gender and age were not just about the position of the girl child and older women. Age could also be used as a grounds for discrimination at other stages of a woman's life, and as a consequence their capacities were not used to the full. For instance, women wanting to return to work after taking care of children had far less chance of reintegrating if they were over 40, and women gradually disappeared from television and cinema films once they reached the age of 35. Within the European Union, new standards on age discrimination were slowly being established, and legislation to combat such discrimination in the workplace was being implemented.

24. Age mattered in the composition of the global population as well. Women over 80 outnumbered men in that age group by almost two to one. Therefore, it was encouraging that the Active Ageing policy framework of the World Health Organization devoted attention to gender and ageing. Poverty was one of the biggest threats facing older women; it impacted their health, living conditions and participation in community activities. A sustained effort was needed to enable women to take care of themselves at every stage of their lives. To that end, obstacles rooted in culture, religion, tradition and the law, which excluded women from training and from pursuing a career, as well as holding on to their assets, must be recognized.

25. A careful look should be taken at the image of older women in society. They were usually portrayed as victims of a disaster or as grandmothers, when they had any image at all; most often they were invisible. More images showing the diversity of the roles played by older women were needed. Governments could start by screening their own documents to evaluate the image of older women projected in their policy papers. Statistics broken down by gender and age would also help to show more clearly how older women contributed to society.

26. **Ms. Mekashbeb** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly had made a major contribution to raising awareness of women's issues and had highlighted the urgent need to address all forms of discrimination and to ensure that women enjoyed equal rights and were able to enhance their skills so as to play a role in peace and development. Despite what had been achieved, however, the status of women in many countries, particularly in Africa and in the occupied Arab territories, had not improved.

27. In accordance with the teachings of the Koran and of the Green Book, which called for an end to oppressive relationships in society and the emergence of women from inherited backwardness, her country had enabled women to exercise their full rights and perform their obligations in society as a whole, in particular in the armed forces and in the decision-making organs of the country. Women now represented her country in national, regional and international forums. Those achievements had been celebrated on the occasion of the national day of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya the previous September which was now considered an annual women's day.

28. Since its accession to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1989, her country had adopted laws embodying the principles of the equality of rights, opportunities and duties as between men and women in all areas of life. Her country recognized human rights as rights of all people, irrespective of their sex and, on that basis, had begun to ratify all international conventions and instruments relating to human rights, ensuring, in particular, that the economic rights of women were in every respect the same as those of men.

29. Her delegation was very concerned at the situation of women in many countries in the world, particularly in Africa, as a result of poverty, ignorance, disease, exploitation, and displacement as a result of wars and natural disasters. Despite the efforts made by African countries to fulfil their obligations at the national and international levels, the situation called for a major international cooperative effort in order to help them implement the Beijing Declaration. In the context of the agenda items under consideration, her delegation could not fail to mention its concern at the subjection of women in occupied Palestine and the Syrian Golan, on a daily basis, to indignities and violations of their human rights at the hands of the Zionist occupation forces.

30. In conclusion, she said that her country's full commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action would remain the cornerstone of its efforts in the future as it was convinced that the support of national efforts to ensure the advancement of women was the best way to bring about an end to the constant violations of women's rights elsewhere, and to convince other States of the necessity of ensuring the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, as well as all forms of marginalization and exploitation of women.

31. **Ms. Radhi** (Bahrain) said that, under the Bahraini Constitution, the political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were guaranteed to Bahraini women, whose accomplishments at the national level were a source of pride. The Constitution also guaranteed equal opportunities and her Government had sought to ensure that women enjoyed their right to education and employment, as well as their constitutional and political rights as voters and candidates, thus reflecting the progress achieved as part of the reform process under way. The Bahraini media had played an important role in encouraging women's involvement in politics and working women now accounted for 26 per cent of the labour force, compared with 5 per cent in 1971.

32. Established as a focal point for the ministries concerned with women's affairs, the Higher Council for Women had begun drafting a national strategy for the advancement of women in Bahrain, which broadly outlined the means of unlocking their significant potential. Bahraini women occupied high-level posts, for example, as ministers and ambassadors, as well as leading positions in the fields of health, education, internal affairs, defence and commerce, in addition to which they participated in international forums on all matters and at all levels. Women's non-governmental organizations in Bahrain also played an effective role in supporting and defending the rights of Bahraini women. Moreover, female Bahraini doctors and members of the Bahraini Red Crescent had recently become engaged in post-war humanitarian work in Iraq, particularly that involving women and children.

33. In 2002, Bahrain had acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and ratified the agreement establishing the Arab Women's Organization, the aim of which was to strengthen Arab cooperation to advance the status of women and promote their role in society. Despite the accomplishments thus far achieved by Bahraini women, however, scope still remained for their wider participation in leadership and decision-making in order to ensure their ongoing contribution to the country's development and the general advancement of women.

34. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for Palestine) said that, while women throughout the world were making progress, the situation of Palestinian women continued to deteriorate under the harsh reality of the Israeli occupation. Basic rights such as freedom of movement, the right to work, the right to education and medical care and the right to be treated with respect and dignity had been denied on a daily basis. Grave violations of international humanitarian law by the Israeli occupying forces had continued unabated since September 2000, and over 200 women and 600 children had been killed, with thousands more injured or disabled. Demolitions had turned thousands of Palestinian homes into rubble, and as a result, Palestinian mothers were left with the impossible task of making a home for their families where there was nothing but destruction.

35. The confiscation of agricultural land to build settlements had denied thousands of women and their families an income. Continuing restrictions on the movement of people and goods had crippled the economy and social and political life, and had led to needless deaths because ambulances and humanitarian vehicles had been delayed at checkpoints regardless of the severity of the emergency. Women had actually given birth at Israeli checkpoints since they were prevented from reaching hospitals in time. The weakened economic situation had resulted in high levels of anaemia and malnutrition among Palestinian women and children as well.

36. Her delegation looked forward to the day when it could come before the Committee to report real improvements in the situation of Palestinian women, but as long as the Israeli occupation existed and the military campaign continued, that would be impossible.

37. **Ms. Bethel** (Bahamas) said that her delegation aligned itself with the statements by Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and of Guyana on behalf of CARICOM. While the international community had recognized the indispensable role of gender equality and women's empowerment in achieving social and economic development as well as peace and security, much remained to be done to reach the targets which the international community had set. A key theme running through the Millennium Declaration and the outcome documents of the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development had been the importance of women's equal participation in the decision-making process.

38. It was a source of pride to her delegation that the Bahamas had built a strong record of political participation by its women and was making steady

progress towards targets for participation in decision-making processes: 20 per cent of the members of the House of Assembly, 43 per cent of the Senate and 25 per cent of the Cabinet were women. For her part, she was honoured to serve as the first female Permanent Representative of the Bahamas, although she was aware that she was part of a very small minority at the United Nations.

39. It was clear that such levels of participation would not be possible without meeting international commitments in other areas affecting women's empowerment, for example, universal primary and secondary education. The Caribbean region continued to be devastated by HIV/AIDS, with disproportionate effects on women and girls. In response, the Bahamas had embarked on an intensive awareness-raising campaign including prevention, care and treatment programmes.

40. The international community had also recognized that a multisectoral and crosscutting approach was needed regarding women's development and participation in society. In an effort to bring disparate approaches together, the Bahamas had established a Women's Desk in 1981, which had later been expanded into the Bureau of Women's Affairs. While it was proud of what it had achieved with limited time and resources, her Government recognized that much remained to be done. Accordingly, a Constitutional Commission had been appointed to review the remaining vestiges of inequality in the Constitution, and to propose remedies.

41. The world's development and prosperity depended on the empowerment of half of humanity. She called on States to reaffirm their commitment to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and to the targets set for women's empowerment and gender equality, for the benefit of all.

42. **Ms. Jahan** (Bangladesh) said that her country placed great priority on issues concerning women, out of its belief that pluralism, democracy, good governance, human rights, gender equality and empowerment of women could lead a nation to sustainable development. It also believed that access to productive resources, ownership rights, economic independence and education were critical to ensure women's empowerment. Bangladesh had invested heavily in women's education and economic empowerment. Special incentives had narrowed the gap in girls' school enrolment. Women were increasingly being integrated into the economic mainstream, through informal education and micro-credit. The socio-economic empowerment of women was gradually being transformed into their political empowerment: the Government had been headed by women Prime Ministers for the past 12 years. Women in Bangladesh were also venturing into such non-traditional professions as the police force and the military.

43. Bangladesh was among the first countries to ratify the Optional Protocol to the CEDAW Convention, and to establish an independent Ministry for Women's Affairs. It had reviewed its legislation to bring it into line with the commitments made at Beijing to protect women from violence and discrimination. Her delegation had also been instrumental in the adoption of the landmark Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. Some areas of global concern requiring further attention included the situation of women in armed conflict, violence against women and trafficking in women. Finally, her delegation endorsed the views of the Group of 77 and China on INSTRAW and stressed the importance of appointing a Director without further delay.

44. **Mr. Hyassat** (Jordan) said that women continued to suffer violence, discrimination and ill-treatment, despite the many international measures designed to ensure their empowerment, protection, welfare and equality with men. In order to rectify that situation, it was essential to identify and address the reasons for the failure to implement fully the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, including poor social awareness, inadequate legal protection of women's rights and the existence of traditional or customary practices incompatible with those rights. Not only should the relevant laws and legislation therefore be reviewed, but campaigns to raise awareness of women's rights should be run for the benefit of all groups in society, including women and girls themselves, who should have access to information and communication technology in order to learn about the rights guaranteed to them under international instruments.

45. Greater attention should also be devoted to eliminating the problem of violence against women,

and domestic violence in particular, in view of the physical and mental effects which it had on them and its consequences for society as a whole. Already difficult and challenging enough in normal peace-time circumstances, the fulfilment of international commitments in connection with women's rights was further complicated in situations of armed conflict and foreign occupation, which increased women's vulnerability. More concerted international efforts were therefore needed to alleviate the suffering thus caused and ensure observance of the relevant laws, particularly international humanitarian law, by the parties to all conflicts, punishment for those who violated such laws and the involvement of women in peace-building.

46. In the context of intensifying international cooperation to strengthen women's rights, Jordan had hosted the second Arab Women's Summit in 2002, resulting in the adoption of the Amman Declaration and a strategy for the advancement of Arab women. At the national level, it was pursuing policies designed to achieve the advancement of women, gender mainstreaming, full gender equality and the involvement of women in all aspects of life. To that end, the electoral law had been amended in order to guarantee wider political participation for women, in which connection he thanked the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division for its swift response in advising the Jordanian women running as candidates in the recent elections and looked forward to further such cooperation.

47. Other laws and legislative enactments, including the Labour Act, had also been amended to guarantee greater protection for women against exploitation and ill-treatment. Jordan was grateful for the cooperative efforts of the United Nations Development Fund for Women to strengthen women's rights, and its Government was endeavouring to complete its ratification of amendments to the Penal Code in order to impose heavier penalties on those who perpetrated "crimes of honour". It was also taking steps to establish and develop centres for the care and rehabilitation of victims of violence.

48. **Mr. Saranga** (Mozambique) said that Mozambique associated itself with the statements made by Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and by Malawi on behalf of the Southern African Development Community. Despite the progress achieved in the area of gender mainstreaming, women and girls continued to be vulnerable owing to the profound gender inequalities that still existed throughout the world. Women and girls were the principal victims of domestic violence, sexual exploitation, trafficking, mutilation, sexual harassment and rape. To address the issue of the advancement of women, States must commit themselves once again to implementing the decisions and recommendations of the Millennium Summit, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

49. In Mozambique, and in many African countries, women played an important role in achieving peace, poverty eradication, and economic and social development. In July 2003, the African leaders had adopted the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. They had also adopted the African Union structure which provided for the specific representation of women, particularly at the decision-making level. The Southern African Development Community had also developed and implemented programmes to enhance the participation of women in the region's economic cooperation and integration process.

50. The advancement of women continued to be a priority on the agenda of the Government of Mozambique, which had adopted measures to ensure that all spheres of activity had a gender perspective. The central objective was to promote women's rights and ensure their participation in the decision-making process. Activities were focused on promoting access to education for girls and increasing the number of women in public institutions at all levels. In close partnership with civil society, his country was also reviewing national legislation with a view to incorporating the principal provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other related international and regional instruments.

51. **Ms. Noman** (Yemen), referring to the report of the Secretary-General on traditional or customary practices affecting the health of women and girls (A/58/169), said that her country did not recognize the information in the report concerning her country and asked what criteria had been used in preparing the report and what the sources of that information were. Yemen had granted women full rights and the Minister of Health had issued a decision prohibiting female genital mutilation.

52. Women now constituted a majority of the workforce in her country in both the public and private sectors, holding leadership and senior diplomatic posts, and a number of aircraft captains were women. National legislation had accorded women the right to vote and to be candidates for election to office and they fully exercised those rights. The proportion of women students in universities was now high in comparison with that in the past.

53. **Ms. Bharucha** (Pakistan) said that her delegation associated itself with the statement made by Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Over the last few years, progress had been made in the advancement of women, and there was a global will to move forward. However, it was necessary to consolidate achievements and prepare to meet new challenges. While providing opportunities, globalization had adversely affected underprivileged societies, making women more vulnerable to exploitation. Poverty eradication was a fundamental step towards a world free of exploitation and the empowerment of women was crucial for achieving that goal.

54. The empowerment of women in all areas of national life was incorporated into the Constitution of Pakistan, which not only guaranteed equal right to all citizens irrespective of their sex, but also provided opportunities for affirmative action in favour of women. Pakistan's national policy for the development and empowerment of women was aimed at achieving gender equity and equality, the social, political and economic empowerment of all Pakistani women, a just, democratic society, and economic prosperity through sustainable development. The key measures to implement the policy included ensuring a gender-sensitive approach to development, mainstreaming gender issues, and compulsory, free primary education for all and equal opportunities for employment.

55. The Government had introduced a devolution plan to give power to the people through revitalizing local bodies and creating district governments. The reforms were the greatest step forward in empowering women and achieving gender equality in Pakistan, because one third of the seats on all the local bodies were reserved for women. That had resulted in the election of more than 40,000 women councillors. Likewise, a certain number of seats in the National and Provincial Assemblies were reserved for women. Encouraged by affirmative policies, women in Pakistan had achieved senior positions in social, economic and political fields and were represented in all sectors of the workforce. Pakistan was committed to creating a society free from discrimination and exploitation.

56. **Ms. Leyton** (Chile), after associating her delegation fully with the statements made by the representative of Peru on behalf of the Rio Group and by the representative of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that she would like to extend her congratulations to the delegations from the Islamic world on the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Shirin Ebadi for her courageous campaigning for democracy and human rights.

57. Her Government was particularly concerned about equal access for women to decision-making and their full participation in the workforce. Further economic development, with higher incomes and better income distribution, was unthinkable in Chile without greater participation by women. Indeed, much of the reduction in poverty in that country over the past decade had been due to the second salary brought into the poorest households by women. Unfortunately, the level of women's participation in the workforce was still relatively low, largely for cultural reasons, which tended to minimize the importance of the working woman's contribution to household income. At the same time, paid professional work was still viewed very differently from unpaid work in the home. Access to a paid job was a prerequisite for the full exercise by both men and women of their civic rights and for their self-fulfilment and sense of worth. Paid work was a source of dignity and social status, unlike unpaid work in the home or work done for pleasure.

58. In view of the profound and sweeping changes affecting society as a whole, the more equitable participation of women in the workplace would require changes in people's daily lives, including in their reproductive habits. The sharing of family responsibilities and a better work-home balance would give both men and women a better quality of life, improve productivity and make better use of the population's skills. Gender roles were being redefined and new opportunities were being created as technology became more user-friendly and attitudes changed: the question was how to ensure that the entry of women into the workforce was achieved in a fair way such that it improved everyone's quality of life.

59. In that respect, the Chilean National Office for Women's Affairs had taken a number of innovative and

practical measures involving the private sector, including steps to promote good labour practices that offered equal opportunities for men and women; pilot schemes in private companies, workshops and awareness-raising activities had been organized and an equal opportunities award set up. Guidelines on how to design and implement a programme to improve the work-home balance had also been published. Although the results were only just beginning to show, she was confident that her Government's efforts to eradicate poverty and promote the human rights of both men and women would eventually lead to a fairer society in which prosperity was widely shared.

60. Turning to the question of the human rights of women in Afghanistan, she said that, despite some very welcome changes, there was still a long way to go before they met universally recognized standards. She therefore urged the Afghan authorities to spare no effort to ensure that those rights were fully respected, so that Afghan women could take an active part in building a prosperous and just nation that preserved its rich cultural and religious identity.

61. **Ms. Christofides** (International Organization for Migration (IOM)) said that migrant women were particularly prone to discrimination and abuse because of their dual vulnerability as women and foreigners. Moreover, few migration-related policies — in either their countries of origin or their countries of destination — had adjusted to the feminization of migration, and women migrants were often unaware of their rights and obligations and thus were even more vulnerable to all kinds of physical and mental abuse, including sexual exploitation. Women migrants were also often isolated and torn between the cultures of the host country and their home country.

62. IOM was especially concerned about the tremendous upsurge in trafficking in women that had taken place in recent years. A strong and concerted response was needed from Governments, international organizations and all sectors of civil society to put an end to women's exploitation by traffickers and other criminals. That response must include legislation to punish traffickers and to protect potential victims. Trafficking could only be tackled effectively if Governments responded decisively to the challenges posed by the interrelationship between migration and violence and if better indicators were developed. For that purpose, more research was needed into good practice in the collection and analysis of data on trafficking, with due regard for personal privacy.

63. IOM followed a dual strategy to combat trafficking in women workers and violence against them: it tried to prevent the problem from arising in the first place, by running information campaigns in countries of origin, and then provided assistance to those who nevertheless became victims, by offering protection or help to return home, as appropriate. In addition, it undertook capacity-building activities to assist government institutions that were confronted with trafficking. While welcoming the forthcoming entry into force of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, she called on Governments to ratify the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air and stressed the need for decisive action by all the actors involved if victimized migrant women were to resume a life of dignity in safety.

64. **Mr. Langmore** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that gender equality was a key element of ILO efforts to promote decent work for all and was one of the operational objectives of the ILO programme and budget for 2004-2005. Although more women were entering the labour market, the world was not making the most of their talent and they still tended to earn considerably less than men for equivalent work. Moreover, women were at greater risk of losing their jobs and found it harder to re-enter the workforce than men, and they increasingly found themselves in precarious jobs where they were exposed to violence and discrimination.

65. Women working in export-processing jobs and in free-trade zones, migrants and workers of ethnic origin were particularly vulnerable. Furthermore, although women accounted for the majority of the population over the age of 60, they were at a much higher risk than men of suffering a drastic drop in their living standards when they retired, often because of breaks in their career. On the positive side, trade unions were beginning to realize that they needed to adapt their structures to reflect the increasing number of women workers and the Eighth World Women's Conference of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions had called for the better implementation of ILO conventions of particular relevance to women and for the promotion of a convention on sexual harassment.

66. To meet a need for advice from member States, employers and workers' organizations on how to put the principles of gender equality into practice, the ILO Gender Promotion Department had developed an information base on equal employment opportunities for women and men, known as "e.quality@work", in which the arrangements made by a range of Governments and other actors to promote such opportunities were set out. The same department was responsible for the ILO response to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, in the form of the "More and Better Jobs for Women and Men" programme, through which it helped member States to develop and implement national action plans for women's employment.

67. In a world increasingly dominated by information and communications technology, women continued to have less access than men to training, with the result that gender inequalities were leading to new forms of social exclusion. The Gender Caucus preceding the forthcoming World Summit on the Information Society had provided an excellent opportunity to discuss those concerns. ILO also had a Bureau for Gender Equality, which promoted equality between men and women throughout the organization and advised on the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all ILO policies. Progress had been made in that area, but it was recognized that more effective agents of change were needed. At the same time, the member States of ILO had affirmed, at the 2003 Annual Labour Conference, their commitment to making gender equality in the world of work a reality.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.